

Advocating the ocean literacy principles in Europe

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How to communicate oceans and ocean science to the wider community is a daily challenge for marine science communicators in Europe and abroad. The public considers seas and oceans as a hostile or remote environment or a place for leisure only. As an open-ended operational pan-European network of science communicators focused on marine science communication, education and outreach, the Marine Board Communication Panel (MBCP) can play a role in advocating ocean literacy in Europe. The group was first set up in 2000, and after having been reactivated in 2006, has grown to the current team of 15 communication professionals from as many Marine Board member institutes in 12 European countries. Supported by the Marine Board, this panel is well placed to link up marine science in Europe with communication and outreach efforts, and to assist in bridging the national and European efforts in this domain.

Within this respect, in 2010 the MBCP drafted an 'Action plan to Upgrade and REinforce Ocean Literacy in Europe' (AUREOLE). This plan should be used as a general guideline for the future, rather than as a real action plan with dedicated funding. AUREOLE included (1) the identification of ocean science essential principles and fundamental concepts for Europe and for individual countries (based upon the exercise being carried out in the US and Portugal); (2) the launch of a network of marine scientists and educators to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for learners of all ages (the European Marine Science and Education Association – EMSEA); (3) an inventory of ocean literacy and information needs; (4) a screening and update of educational curricula in all European countries on ocean content; (5) an inventory/compilation of existing high-quality educational/curricular ocean science material and educational resources (portal)(EMSEA); (6) assisting in the implementation of the essential principles of ocean science into educational curricula across Europe; (7) stimulating a more intensive information exchange with other Ocean Literacy-initiatives (U.S., Pacific = IPMEN: www.ipmen.net,...); (8) addressing the need for active collaboration between marine scientists, ocean educators and the public in future European projects (e.g. by organising teacher-training sessions). On top of that, ocean literacy initiatives should also try to collaborate with existing operational oceanography activities.